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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000107

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SUBJECT: KACHIN CEASE-FIRE LEADERS GEAR UP FOR THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

REF: USDAO RANGOON BM 240926Z JAN 05

Classified By: DCM Ron McMullen for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

1. (C) Summary. Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) leaders, meeting with Emboff to gauge current U.S. policy toward the GOB ahead of the upcoming National Convention session, view their relationship with the GOB as basically unchanged following former PM Khin Nyunt's ouster. The KIO considers a December assassination attempt on the leader of a Kachin splinter group as an internal power struggle over commercial interests. End Summary.

KIO WILL AGAIN PARTICIPATE IN THE NC

2. (C) On January 21 Poloff met with Col. Zau Seng (aka U Gaw Yi Zaw Hsaing), Vice-Chairman of the Kachin State Special Region 2, and Dr. La Ja, Secretary of the KIO Central Committee. Daw Seng Raw, Program Director of the Kachin-based Metta Foundation (an independent local NGO), also joined the meeting, which took place at the request of the KIO leaders.

3. (SBU) Col. Zau Seng said that the KIO plans to participate in the upcoming National Convention (NC) that recommences in mid-February. He said that the KIO will be sending the same 5 delegates who attended the May-July 2004 session (Note: The KIO, and the two other Kachin cease-fire groups, NDA-K and KDA, are each allowed to send 5 delegates as "special invited guests" for a total of 15 delegates and each group may select its own delegates. End Note.)

4. (C) The KIO representatives wanted to know if the U.S. positions on the NC, NLD, and ASSK have changed. Poloff assured them that the U.S. position has not changed and that we still recognize the legitimacy of the 1990 elections and that NLD MPs-elect should be sitting in parliament, not in jail. Col. Zau Seng also inquired about what role the United States sees for the NLD and ASSK after the NC. Poloff restated that all political parties should be allowed to participate in the process and, without the release of ASSK and the participation of the NLD, any subsequent elections could not be viewed as a genuine opportunity to achieve national reconciliation.

5. (C) The KIO representatives expressed that the basic relationship between the SPDC and KIO remains essentially unchanged following the ouster of former PM Khin Nyunt. However, they admitted that it was requiring greater effort and time to get acquainted and develop communication lines with the Military Affairs Service (MAS), which has replaced the role of Khin Nyunt's OCMI for liaising with the cease-fire groups (CFGs).

WHO DONE IT?

6. (C) Col. Zau Seng discussed an attempted assassination of the NDA-K leader Zahkung Ting Ying on December 10, 2004 (Ref A). The KIO representatives said they offered to carry out a joint investigation with the NDA-K, but their offer was rejected. The KIO interlocutors believe it was an inside job and the result of an internal power struggle, possibly due to conflicts related to logging concessions with Chinese entrepreneurs. To date no arrests have been made.

SPDC PROMOTES THE NATIONAL CONVENTION AMONG THE CFGs

7. (C) Official GOB media reported that Col. Zau Seng and his party met with SPDC Secretary-1 (S-1), Lt. Gen. Thein Sein, on January 23 to discuss the NC, the 7-step road map, national reconciliation, and development goals. (Note: Col. Zau Seng did not mention to us that he would be meeting with S-1 during the same trip to Rangoon. End Note.) An additional Kachin leader, Rev. Saboi Jum, participated in the S-1 meeting and told us on January 24 that "significant gaps exist between the SPDC and the Kachin positions" on the drafting of a new constitution.

8. (C) Comment: The SPDC appears to be diligently working to shore up support from the various ethnic groups and CFGs leading up to the NC and to ensure their participation (S-1 also met in Hpa-an on January 10 with Pado Aung San, former KNU Minister of Forestry who defected in 1998). There are no

signs, however, that the SPDC is ready to make any overtures to the NLD, and there are no indications the SPDC is on the verge of relaxing its grip on ASSK. End Comment.  
Martinez